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U.S. Resettlement administration. Land utilization division
Land use planning section. Maryland unit.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A TEN-YEAR SUBMARGINAL LAND PURCHASE PROGRAM FOR MARYLAND

The several departments in the State of Maryland particularly interested in the better utilization of submarginal lands present herewith their recommendations for a ten-year program of land acquisition of specific areas which may contribute to the general welfare by public ownership and development.

An orderly land acquisition program should form an important part of a more comprehensive plan for the better utilization of Maryland's land resources. There are extensive acreages in certain parts of Maryland in which the present uses do not adequately provide for the inhabitants of those areas and/or do not contribute to the recreational requirements of nearby urban populations to which the lands may be best suited. These areas are generally characterized by soils of very low productivity, an excessive amount of tax-delinquent property, a large portion of the population being maintained largely by some form of relief or other public subsidies. Quite often mortgage indebtedness is excessive, and standards of living very low, the inhabitants of these submarginal areas being under-nourished, improperly clothed, and social conditions resulting in the development of undesirable citizens.

A public purchase program should not be expected to form a complete solution to all the problems of human welfare in relation to our land resources, although it may aid materially in alleviating distressed conditions in specific areas. The most important consideration is the best utilization of the land for the continued welfare of our population. Improvement of living conditions for some portion of the population should be the ultimate goal in every land purchase project. The program endeavors to consider some recreational advantages for people living in urban centers as well as providing adequately for the stranded rural families.

The areas listed and briefly described are recommended for purchase during the ten-year period 1937-1947. These areas do not comprise all of the submarginal agricultural land in Maryland, but only places where land use problems are most acute. Proposed priority for acquisition of the respective areas conforms to the order in which they are listed below.

I - The most urgent need in the land purchase program calls for the blocking out and extension of areas now being acquired by the Federal Government for public purposes to be supervised and controlled by the State of Maryland. There are at present three such areas in this State.

A. Garrett County Purchase Project - Recommendations for land purchase in this county involve the blocking out of State forest land, areas within the Resettlement Administration's purchase project and the extension of the publicly owned land to connect with the State forest in the southeastern part of the county, aggregating in round numbers 33,000 acres. The area recommended for public ownership includes parts of Election Districts one, three, four, five, six, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, and fifteen, and extends generally over the Backbone, Big Savage, and Negro Mountain Ranges.

Economic and social phenomena as well as physical factors contribute to the submarginality of the area. The proportion of rural -

families on relief is higher than anywhere else in the State. The allotment of the State equalization fund for school purposes is higher than in any other county. Tax delinquency is high. Settlement is scattered. The proportion of families on improved roads, or having telephone, electricity, or other modern conveniences is exceptionally low. Most of the area is wooded. Farming is of a self-sufficing type.

The topography of the area is very mountainous. Valleys are narrow and tortuous with steep sides rising to sharp, ridge-like crests. The principal soil type is the Dekalb stony loam. Most of the land is too steep or covered with too many boulders and smaller stones for profitable farming.

Recommendations as to land use indicate that the area is adaptable to a combination of forestry, game conservation, and an extensive recreational park.

The value of the land is low. The entire purchase area could probably be acquired for an average of $8 per acre or less.

B. Lower Eastern Shore Problem Area - The area designated includes most of Election District seven, and parts of Districts one, two, and eight of Worcester County; the northern and eastern portions of Districts four and fifteen, respectively, in Somerset County; and a smaller area located chiefly in the southern end of District four, but extending into Districts five and six in Wicomico County. These two areas considered as one problem would entail the future purchase of about 29,000 acres.

The soils of the area are characterized by the Portsmouth and St. John's series, which are poorly drained and present a generally swampy or semi-swampy condition.

Population is sparse and scattered throughout the area. In district number seven, Worcester County, the population is but twelve per square mile, this being representative of the entire purchase area.

Farming is generally of a self-sufficing nature. The income to farmers is low. In the past farm income was often supplemented with income from the sale of forest products. During recent years low prices and a lack of demand for these forest products caused a serious economic condition. Today there are an increasing number of abandoned farms. The inhabitants have been compelled to move or to depend on relief or other agencies for their sustenance.

A state forest is contiguous to the area and the Resettlement Administration has optioned or purchased a portion of the submarginal lands.

This project might well form the nucleus for recreational developments in the lower Eastern Shore, as well as providing lands for game conservation, an economically profitable state forest, and

an opportunity for supplemental income to some of the nearby residents, who may find work in the purchase area.

C. The Blue Ridge - This area follows the crest of Catoctin Mountain in Frederick County, and extends from the Potomac River on the south to the Mason and Dixon line on the north. Included in the area are: Camp Ritchie, about 10,000 acres recently taken over by the National Parks Service, the city of Frederick Watershed holding, an area of state forest land, and Braddock Heights.

Most of the area is wooded; the topography is very rugged; and soil fertility is low. Population is sparse, roads are lacking, and the area is generally uneconomic.

Owing to considerable acreages of public holdings already within the confines of the area, it would be necessary to purchase only about 12,000 acres to connect the public holdings from the Potomac River to the Pennsylvania State line.

Probably the Sky-line Dirve, begun in Virginia, may logically be extended over this scenic mountain ridge across the State of Maryland. It is recommended that the entire area be developed as a recreational park of a type suitable to the scenic and rugged topography, the high elevation and the cool climate.

II - Waterfowl Conservation Area, Bloodsworth Island, Dorchester County - The area consists of approximately 5,000 acres. This Island is located in the Chesapeake Bay and forms a part of Dorchester County. The land consists entirely of tidal marsh and meadow. It is ideally located for a wild life refuge. The area is uninhabited and therefore does not present a problem of human distress. However, it does have a human interest by providing a means of assuring an ample quantity of waterfowl for attraction to our Eastern hunters. The numbers of waterfowl, mainly ducks and geese, have been greatly reduced due to the encroachment of hunters. This conservation area should provide a place where waterfowl may be protected and where their increase may be encouraged. The cost of the land should probably be not over $5 to $10 per acre.

III - Recreational Areas.

A. Beach on Chesapeake Bay, Calvert County - This area consists of approximately 3,000 acres located in the southeastern portion of Calvert County and in the first District. It is bounded on the east by the Chesapeake Bay, on the north by Governor's Run, on the west by State Highway #2, which leads from Prince Frederick to Solomons Island and extends southward about three miles. The soils are almost entirely of the Sassafras Series and are sandy in nature. The land has a broken topography, being cut in several places by ravines. It slopes gently to the northeast forming an excellent beach along the Chesapeake Bay. More than half of the area is covered with scrub pine or other forest growth. The farms are very badly eroded, incomes are small, and the occupants are forced to depend mainly on outside sources for their

an opportunity for supplemental income to some of the nearby residents, who may find work in the purchase area.

C. The Blue Ridge - This area follows the crest of Catoctin Mountain in Frederick County, and extends from the Potomac River on the south to the Pennsylvania line on the north. Included in the area are: Cedar Ridge, about 10,000 acres recently taken over by the National Park Service, the city of Frederick "watershed" holdings, various of state forest land, and Gambrill Mountain.

Most of the area is wooded; the topography is very rugged; and soil fertility is low. Population is sparse, roads are lacking, and the area is generally undeveloped.

Owing to considerable entrance of public holdings already in the northern part of the area, it would be desirable to provide only limited facilities to enhance the public benefits from the forest lands and the Frederick Watershed.

Probably the Skyline Drive, Va. and in Virginia, may be extended over this rugged mountain ridge across the State of Maryland. It is recommended that the entire area be developed as a recreational park of a type for public to enjoy the scenic and rugged topography, the high elevation and the cool climate.

II - Waterline Conservation Area, Middletown Island, Frederick County - The area consists of approximately 6,000 acres. This island is located in the Potomac River and forms a part of the Middletown Valley. The area consists of rolling terrain and lowlands. It is heavily loaded from a life nature. The area is undeveloped and therefore does not possess trees of large diameter. Formerly it was used as a hunting lodge by a number of people for attractive to the area because of its isolation, natural lakes and ponds, have recently purchased the area for development of industry. This conservation area should provide a place where recreational and scenic facilities may be developed. The best of this land should probably be not more 25 to 30% of the area.

III - Recreational Areas.

A. Road on Catoctin Park, Carroll County - This area consists of approximately 3,000 acres located in the Catoctin Mountains of Carroll County and in the 7th District. It is bounded on the east by the Chesapeake Bay, on the north by Sylvanus Run, on the west by State Highway 24, which leads from Prince Frederick to Solomons Island, and extends southward about three miles. The soils are almost entirely of the Sassafras series and are sandy in nature. The land has a gentle topography, being cut in several places by streams. It slopes gently to the northeast forming an excellent beach along the Chesapeake Bay. Here the half of the area is covered by a mixed hardwood stand of oak-chestnut type. The farms are very heavily wooded, including the small, and the farms are forced to depend mainly on cutting for a living.

living. this area can be reached from Washington or Baltimore by automobile in only a little more than an hour's time. It is far enough away from the city to be out of the congested commercial traffic, but not too far away for an afternoon's recreation. It is recommended that the area be developed as a bathing beach with other suitable forms of recreational developments for moderate-to-low income white people. This land should range in price from $20 to $100 per acre and should probably average about $35 per acre.

B. Potomac Recreation Park - The area lies within the third District of Charles County. It is bounded on the west by the broad Potomac River, and on the east by the Potomac State Forest and covers about 8,000 acres. The section recommended for purchase is undoubtedly in a serious economic condition. The value of farm land and buildings per acre is the lowest in the country. Many people in the area are on relief, abandoned farms are not uncommon; land owners are in bad condition financially, and tax delinquency is relatively high.

Approximately three-fourths of the land is wooded. The soil consists principally of the Leonardtown and Rustom Silt Loams which are low in fertility. Much of the land is not well drained. Poor roads and lack of modern conveniences has also contributed to undesirable conditions.

It is recommended that this area be purchased and developed as a recreation center for colored persons. That part of the area fronting on the Potomac River could be made into a bathing beach, while other open land might be developed for such outdoor sports as; golf, baseball, tennis, etc. The entire area could be combined with the holdings of the Potomac State Forest and the wooded areas used for forest.

Land in this area usually sells at a comparatively low figure. It should range in price from $10 to $30 per acre.

IV - Baltimore-Washington Submarginal Land Area - There is an area of land in the northwestern part of Anne Arundel County, which from a productivity standpoint may be classed among the poorest in the State. The soils are chiefly of the Norfolk loamy sand and Tuxedo soil series. They are lacking in organic matter, and are not physically adapted to agriculture.

The area proposed for purchase would be about 1½ miles wide and approximately 12 miles long, extending from the Patuxent River northeast to Fort George Meade and then north to the Patapsco River at the junction of the Baltimore, Howard, and Anne Arundel County Lines.

There are at present several large public holdings between Washington and Baltimore. The proposed Purchase Area would connect the public holdings in Prince George's County with Fort Meade in Anne Arundel County and extend

toward the Patapsco State Forest in Howard County.

The area would include approximately 10,000 acres; which because of its proximity to large populations may cost more per acre than land in some other proposed purchase areas, but is highly desirable to form connections with other public holdings in the vicinity, and to remove from agriculture some of the poorest land.

V - Forest and Recreational Development, Elk Neck - The area outlined extends southwest from Elkton in Cecil County. It is at the head of the Chesapeake Bay and is bounded on the west by the Northeast River and on the east by Elk River. The territory recommended for purchase embraces about 15,000 acres.

The principal soil series is known as Tuxedo, considered to be one of the poorest soils in Maryland, and classed as non-agricultural. The topography is rolling to hilly and in places is quite rough.

Farms are generally marginal or sub-marginal. Numerous relief cases have been reported. A state forest forms the northern end of the neck and the remainder is dominated by burnt-over wooded tracts.

The recommended purchase area might best be added to the present state forest. It is ideally located with reference to urban centers, accessibility, and natural advantages for development as a recreational park.

The value of the inland tracts of land is about average for the county, but the owners of water-front properties are asking higher prices due to more favorable locations for vacationists.

VI - Allegany Ridges - Recommendations for this area consist of the blocking out of the present Allegany State Forest in Election Districts numbered one, three, and thirty three of Allegany County, and extending the territory to include most of the Oldtown District. The area to be purchased amounts to about 20,000 acres.

Physical and economic conditions here are very similar to those found in the Backbone Mountain region of Garrett County. The principal differences are that the topography is more rugged, ridges are steeper with sharper crests, and valleys are narrower. The soils are generally of a shale-like structure, and more susceptible to erosion when cleared of their forest cover. The human problem is not quite as acute, since the density of population is lower. However, most of the present population must depend largely upon some form of outside income, either from relief agencies or other sources, for their livelihood.

Probably the area would be best adapted to state forest management and development. The poor families should be given an opportunity to locate on more favorable lands for agricultural production.

The cost per acre of land in this area should be relatively low, possibly not over $10 per acre.

Summary Statement: The areas recommended for public purchase aggregate 135,000 acres of land. They are located in parts of eleven counties in every region of the State. Their acquisition is intended to aid not only distressed families within the purchase areas, but also to contribute to the welfare of many other families in the nearby regions.

The above recommendations are approved by:

James W. Coddington
State Specialist
Maryland Land Use Planning Section
Resettlement Administration.

F. W. Besley
State Forester
State Department of Forestry

O. B. Symons
Director
Extension Service, University of Maryland.